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ADVOCATE OF PEACE.

OCTOBER, 1852.

RECOIL OF WAR UPON POLITICIANS.

The cause of Peace, common to all good men, intermeddles with no struggles or schemes of individuals or parties for office and power; but it must, if true to its high purpose, seize on passing as well as on past events to instil into the community lessons of warning and wisdom. One of these is the suicidal folly of civilians abetting war, or a fondness for it, among the people. The latter are the chief sufferers from war, while politicians, as its real authors and abettors, expect from it popularity, emolument and power. More or less of these they must of course gain during its progress; but it is marvellous that they have not learned how it ultimately recoils on themselves, and snatches its highest prizes from their grasp. War takes the lion's share of its political as well as its other spoils. It is a brutal tyrant; and statesmen of the ripest experience, and loftiest abilities, "it throws into the shade, or chains to its car, or crushes beneath its iron hoof. If you cultivate the arts of peace, then will talent, knowledge and wisdom hold the reins of government; but let the people become warlike, and military chieftains will soon drive them all at the point of the bayonet. Review the history of Greece and Rome, of England under Cromwell, of France under Napoleon, of all the republics except our own in the New World; and you will find on this point a superabundance of proof. It is amazing that intellectual men should eulogize warriors, and still more strange the encouragement which statesmen lend to war; for they are thus cherishing a serpent that will one day wreath his folds around themselves, and strangle them to death. It is only in peace that their worth can be fully appreciated, or their merits duly rewarded; while in war, or under its influence even in peace, Pompey outpeers Cicero, Cromwell takes precedence of Milton, and the hero of New Orleans or Tippecanoe, with only a modicum of talent or knowledge, leaves the first minds of the land far behind them in the race of popularity and power."

Our own history is full of warnings on this point. "When politicians bring on war," says a neutral in politics, "they must pay the penalty. In republics, if civilians wish to retain their just influence as statesmen, they must preserve peace. War always has given, and always will give, in our own and in every free country, ascendancy to military reputation. Snatching the prizes of political ambition from the politician, it will carry the successful General to his seat of power. In 1848, some of the politicians who pushed this country into the war of 1812, still live to brood over the fact, that the war raised up military chieftains who clutched from their grasp the Presidential crown, which otherwise would have encircled their brows in

sure succession. It is a most instructive circumstance in our history, that when James Madison, then at the head of the government, manifested a reluctance to favor a declaration of war with England, a committee of three was despatched from a republican caucus to communicate to him the determination of that party to insist upon the measure. The experienced wisdom of that great statesman was overruled, and constrained by the short-sighted zeal of less wary politicians. Of that caucus Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun were the master spirits, and of that committee they were members. Although quite young men, they had, by their genius and eloquence, even then acquired the greatest degree of popularity that can be attained in the sphere of statesmanship. The whole nation was waiting, with admiring eagerness, to confer upon them, one after the other, its highest honor. They had their way, and war was declared. When the revolutionary series of Presidents was brought to a close, on the retirement of James Monroe, Gen. Jackson, the hero of New Orleans, took from Mr. Clay so many of the electoral votes of the West, and from Mr. Calhoun so many of the votes of the South and Middle States, as to leave them both distanced in the race. The popularity of Jackson yielded only to that of Gen. Harrison, the hero of Tippecanoe; and a fresh crop of military chieftains has just been reared to destroy, in all probability, the last chance of these veteran aspirants for the great prize. It is not the least of the eminent services they have rendered their country, that in their baffled ambition, the distinguished statesmen and truly great men whom we have named, teach to all coming times the salutary lesson, that, if politicians will have war, they must step aside for ever from the path of honor, and relinquish the posts of power to overshadowing rivals created by their own suicidal hands. It is not unlikely, as just intimated, that the lesson will be corroborated by the political results of the war in which the country is now involved. Let us hope that it may make a deep and durable impression upon that class of persons whom it so vitally concerns. When the leaders of parties become convinced, that in promoting warlike measures and a military spirit, they are digging their own graves, we confidently rely upon perpetual peace." (1)

This prediction is now fulfilled. The war did actually dig the political grave of its authors and chief abettors. The very President who began it, was denied the compliment even of a solitary vote for his re-nomination; the body-guard of his supporters were nearly all dropped from public service, and the whole party overwhelmed with a defeat that has no parallel in our history. A most salutary warning to politicians; and every true patriot must earnestly desire that it may be duly heeded in future.

But this is not all. The Mexican war drifted back upon us a shoal of candidates for all sorts of office. Before its close, nearly every one of its prominent generals was nominated by somebody even for the presidency itself; (2) not a few of them, like Generals Kearney and Shields, were soon after appointed to high civil offices; (3) a multitude of them, especially

(1) North Am. Rev. for April, 1848, No. LXVI., pp. 315-6.

(2) The shameful quarrels among the generals, even in the city of Mexico, occasioning so many and so protracted courts-martial, both there and at home, arose mainly from competitions, and jealousies, and heart-burnings about the great prize of the republic, the pre-idency. Everybody remembers that the papers teemed month after month with these disgraceful revelations, all the legitimate brood of war in a republic.

(3) The editor of the Boston Atlas, writing from Washington in the winter of 1847-8, speaks "of the great number of young men who are in Washington at this time, who have served as Lieutenants, Captains, &c., in the Mexican war. They are to be seen in the hotels, and are easily distinguished from the common horde of office-seekers and dilettanti, who swarm

at the West and South-west, have been selected for seats in Congress, and their respective State Legislatures; and, to cap the climax, a man, little known to the country a single year before that war, and never dreamed of for any service beyond the army, had no sooner fought the battle of Palo Alto, though a mere skirmish hardly worth a passing paragraph in the history of such a warrior as Napoleon, that the popular war-spirit, even in advance of all party calculation, proclaimed him at once as "the *people's* candidate for the presidency." We are not now sitting in judgment on the man himself; we are only observing how he rose to power. Nobody could blame him for this sudden outburst of popularity, nor have we the slightest wish to disparage him or his friends; we merely say that war alone made him President of these United States. Doubtless, his subsequent reputation for talent, integrity, independence, and other estimable qualities, may have won votes for him; but, beyond a doubt, it was solely his popularity as a general, though acquired in a war odious to the mass of his own supporters, that procured his *nomination* for the high office he ultimately reached. Thus the mere warrior again eclipsed all the great political luminaries of the republic, and threw into practical contempt its great statesmen who had grown grey in its service as civilians, and shed over it the undying lustre of their genius, eloquence and wisdom.

It is painful to dwell on such facts; but we cannot quit this theme without alluding, in the very strong language of another, to the continued influence of the Mexican war in selecting candidates for the presidency: "From another point of the compass a similar moral may be drawn for future presidential aspirants. Neither the Democratic party, nor its Northern leaders, had anything to gain by the Mexican war; and yet they plunged headlong into it at the dictation of the South. The Whig party, as such, always pronounced the war itself to be an aggression, and its territorial acquisitions a robbery. Yet the great body of this party voted the supplies that ratified its inception. Opposition to the war of 1812 had proved politically disastrous to many of those who made it; and it was foreseen that opposition to the Mexican war might be attended with similar results. Hence the lukewarmness of Whig opposition in Congress, and hence the voting of supplies to carry it on. Hence the pro-slavery men, and the 'manifest destiny' men, were allowed to have their way; and so the war was continued at an estimated expenditure in the whole of more than \$200,000,000, and the ultimate acquisition of territory, some portion of which is already occupied by slaves, and two-thirds of which is laid open to slavery by law.

And now, what has been the effect of that war upon both the Democratic

here during the sessions of Congress, by the magnitude and grimness of their mustachios, imperials, and hair in general. Having seen 'the elephant' abroad in the wars, they rush here to head-quarters to tell their stories of hair-breadth 'scapes, and solicit appointments and promotion. From a scene of beastly intoxication, in which one of these young heroes took the chief part, which I witnessed to-day, I fear that their camp life has not improved their morals, or their capacity for useful labor. To a reflective mind, the moral debasement incident to all war, is one of its chief evils. No one can remain long at Washington without noticing the great number of young men who, from having taken part in the victories in Mexico, have returned home unfitted for any profitable labor in the peaceful walks of life. If this war continues much longer, a sufficient number of characters of this class may be thrown upon the country materially to embarrass the action of Congress, and so influence the masses, that the war policy will become the settled policy of the nation; and those of our public men who have the nerve and ability to attempt to stem the war current, will be overthrown, and trampled under foot by the iron-heeled champions of perpetual war!"

and Whig civilians, who either vigorously sustained it, or opposed to it only a feeble resistance? It made the Cæsars who have come back to rule over Rome. But for the Mexican war, General Taylor would have remained a 'frontier colonel,' as Mr. Webster sneeringly called him, and not even lunacy would have conceived of him for President. But for the Mexican war, General Scott, though in honor and in bravery retaining his invincibility, would have lacked, to political wooers, the more potent charm of availability, and would never have been nominated. And but for the Mexican war, the shades of oblivion would soon have perfected their easy work of hiding the name of General Pierce from the world forever. And now, behold the civilians, Cass, Buchanan, Marcy, and the rest, who stood sponsors and god-fathers for that bloody deed! Defeated in 1848 by the very man whom the war they supported, had raised up! General Taylor discomfited only one Santa Anna in Mexico, but half a dozen at home. Look, too, at Mr. Webster, whose giant blows, had they been struck at the fitting time, might have broken the helmet and pierced the mailed armor of that Mars; yet see him thrust aside in 1848, to make room for one hero born of that war, and in 1852 hardly allowed to enter his name as a competitor against another. In 1852, see, also, General Pierce, who had about as much to do with the Mexican victories as little Iulus had to do with the Trojan war, yet plucking the nomination from Cass, Buchanan, Marcy, Douglass, and all the rest. The camp triumphs over cabinet and Senate. The *cedant arma togæ* is read backwards. How many of these warriors will remain in 1856 and in 1860, to shoulder aside the civilians for the third and fourth time, because they were false to their duty in waging or in tolerating that war, remains to be seen. But what a righteous retribution for those civilians who, at first, might have prevented, or afterwards might have stayed, that effusion of human blood! As a specimen of poetic justice, romance or drama has nothing finer."

HONORS TO MILITARY MEN.

At a military dinner given to Sir HARRY SMITH, some three years ago in London, he remarked: "it must be confessed, gentlemen, ours is a DAMNABLE PROFESSION." This same Sir HARRY SMITH was commander-in-chief of the British forces in the Caffre war in South Africa, and in that capacity has done a great deal to illustrate the truth of his own declaration. Whatever may be said in justification of a strictly defensive war, the *profession* of arms is both damnable and infamous. The professional soldier follows war as a trade. He contracts with the government under which he serves, to prosecute *any* war which that government may declare, whether defensive or aggressive, to the best of his ability. He cannot reason and decide whether the war is just or unjust; his sole business is, to obey orders. If he conclude that those orders in any case bind him to commit crime, he has no alternative but to execute them, or resign his commission at the sacrifice of his military reputation. The professional soldier, therefore, whether he be officer or private, is simply a hired assassin. This is strictly and literally the truth. He engages to kill openly or secretly, (for in war a midnight attack upon a sleeping enemy is considered honorable,) whomsoever his government may designate, whether man, woman, or child. For this he is paid a stipulated sum, which is his salary, and means of living. All his military education is intended and adapted to qualify him to kill with skill, neatness and despatch; and he is honored in exact proportion to the number of enemies he has slaughtered.